DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 144 907 SO 010 377

AUTHOR Peterson, Evan T.
TITLE Changes in the Adolescent-Parent Relationship according to Sex Role.
PUB DATE Apr 77
NOTE 16p.; Paper presented at Annual Meeting of the Western Social Science Association (Denver, Colorado, April 21-25, 1977)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Adolescents; *Changing Attitudes; Comparative Analysis; Elementary Secondary Education; Fathers; Mothers; Parent Attitudes; *Parent Child Relationship; Parent Influence; *Parent Role; Sex Role; *Social Change; Social Science Research

ABSTRACT

The study examined changes that have taken place between 1968 and 1976 in terms of adolescent-parent relationships as defined by the interest in and control over adolescents by parents. Also, a comparison was made of the different ways in which young girls and boys are socialized. Questionnaire responses from 7,810 adolescents in 46 high schools collected in 1968 were compared with responses from 7,508 adolescents in 52 schools in 1976. All major regions of the country were represented. The questionnaires contained scales of paternal control, maternal control, paternal interest, and maternal interest. Control referred to parental attempts to modify children's behavior in accordance with predetermined standards of conduct. Interest referred to degree of parental concern for their children. Results showed an increase in both interest and control in 1976. Consistently, the mother was seen to display greater interest and control than the father, regardless of the child's sex. In 1976, there was a greater difference in parents' levels of interest and control over boys as opposed to girls than there was in 1968. This may be due to parental concern about recent developments such as sexual permissiveness and the drug subculture. (Author/AV)

****
* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *
****

OCT 14 1977

CHANGES IN THE ADOLESCENT-PARENT RELATIONSHIP ACCORDING TO SEX ROLE

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Evan T. Peterson
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND THE ERIC SYSTEM CONTRACTORS."

by

Evan T. Peterson
Survey Research Center
Brigham Young University

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

ED144907

Almost from its very beginnings, family sociology has reflected two different and distinct speculations as to the future of the family. One group of family sociologists has interpreted changes in the family as the kind that will eventually lead to the demise of the family as we know it. They look at such conditions as more working wives, a divorce rate that is steadily increasing, a declining birth rate, alternate marriage forms, an increase in nonmarital sex, and a rise in juvenile delinquency as signs of decay in the family. To this group, the atomistic family is a symptom of something which will wreck the society--unbridled individualism.

The second group of family sociologists see the same changes, but interprets them differently. These sociologists see the family as changing and being more adaptable as an emotional unit. For this group, the essential bonds in the family are found more and more in interpersonal relationships among its members, as compared with those of law, custom, public opinion, and duty in the older institutional forms of the family. They see successful marriage and family life in modern society as dependent more and more on the adaptability of the family members.

SO 010 377

One of the two objectives of this paper is to examine the changes that have taken place between 1968 and 1976 in terms of adolescent-parent relationships as defined by the interest in and control over adolescents by parents.

A second objective of this paper is to examine specifically the changes that have taken place in the manner in which the female is socialized in contrast with the manner in which the male is socialized. We assume that if the impact of the women's liberation movement is translated into selected phases of family life, the differences between the way in which males and females are socialized should be minimized.

There seems to be abundant support for this assumption. Melville (1977) maintains that the women's liberation movement is just one recent aspect of a long-term trend toward equality of the sexes. We would assume that this equality would also be reflected in the relationships parents establish with their male and female adolescents. Similarly, Roper and Labeff (1977), after comparing data collected from university students in 1934 with data collected from university students in 1974 found that they were in agreement with Lopata (1971) who pointed out that women are more apt to favor equalitarian and companionate relations because they offer more freedom and opportunity. Other students of the family argue that there has been a restructuring of sex roles (Bernard, 1976), that the feminist movement has helped us redefine sex roles to meet changes in society (Lynn, 1972), and that the feminist movement has affected the ways women are treated as well as their expectations of how they ought to be treated (Epstein, 1975). Again, we assume that such changes should be reflected in the manner in which adolescent females relate to their parents.

METHODOLOGY

The Samples

Response from 7,810 adolescents from forty-six different high schools collected in 1968 will be compared with responses from 7,508 adolescents from fifty-two different high schools collected in 1976. The samples approximate a national cluster sample but, strictly speaking, these are accidental samples. An attempt was made to have participating high schools in all major regions of the country.[1] However, the sample is slightly biased in favor of the Mountain states and the Pacific states; the northeastern part of the country is under-represented.

Within each of the individual high schools, the sample was either the total population of the high school or a cluster sample selected from required classes such as mathematics, English, and health. Most of the high school administrators seem to be interested in securing a "good" sample.

The Questionnaires

A four-page questionnaire was administered in 1968, and a condensed version of it (a three-page questionnaire) was utilized in 1976. The students filled out the questionnaires in their classrooms. While administration of

---

[1]The refusal rate of high school administrators was much lower in 1968 than 1976, largely due to different interpretations of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act which became effective November 19, 1974. Some administrators who participated in 1968 would not participate in 1976 because they felt that questionnaires completed by their students would be in violation of this Act.

mass questionnaires has some difficulties (especially with adolescents), it also has many advantages not present when the research instrument is completed by isolated respondents.

The Scales

Four scales were developed and included in the questionnaires. The scales were paternal control, maternal control, paternal interest, and maternal interest.

Both the maternal control scale and the paternal control scale consisted of the same six questions.[2] The adolescents were asked to indicate how strongly their fathers and mothers would disapprove: a) if they did not tell him or her what they did on their dates or other activities at night, b) if they failed to show him or her proper respect, c) if they repeatedly failed to get their homework done, d) if they started selecting clothes they liked but he or she did not, e) if they started coming home late from school without an acceptable reason, and f) if they started to spend their money for things of

---

[2]Because in pretests it was found that some adolescents had a difficult time thinking in terms of strong and weak parental regulations, it was necessary to alter the form of the questions. It was assumed that it would be easier (and more accurate) for the adolescents to report the degree of reaction they assumed their parents would manifest if they were disobeyed, rather than evaluating abstractly the relative strengths of different regulations.

In a strict sense, this scale does not measure parental control. At best, it measures the perception adolescents have of the degree of parental disapproval or objection (negative sanctions) to assumed norm violation. The control scale does not mean that the control attempts by the parents are successful. High control parents are perceived as attempting to control more behavioral areas in the lives of adolescents than low control parents.

which he or she did not approve.[3]

Both the maternal interest scale and the paternal interest scale consisted of the same six questions, also. The adolescents were asked to indicate the degree of interest their fathers and mothers have in: a) the clubs or organizations to which they belong, b) their daydreams, c) their judgment about family problems, d) what they do at school, e) their problems, and f) how they enjoyed their dates or other activities at night.[4]

Control refers to the attempts of parents to modify or direct their children in accordance with pre-determined standards of conduct. As control is operationally defined here, parents who exercise control over many of their children's activities, even though not always strong control, are considered to exercise greater control over their children than parents who might attempt to rigidly control only one or two of their children's activities.

Interest refers to the degree of concern or regard parents have for their children. Here, too, the degree of interest parents have in their children is proportional to the number of behavioral areas in which they are interested.

---

[3]Both the paternal and maternal control scales are Guttman-type scales. The paternal control scale has a coefficient of reproducibility of .90; the maternal control scale has a coefficient of reproducibility of .91.

While it is recognized that fathers may attempt to control different activities than mothers, the same questions were included in the scales in order to make comparisons between the two scales.

[4]The paternal and maternal interest scales are also Guttman-type scales. The paternal interest scale has a coefficient of reproducibility of .91; the maternal interest scale has a coefficient of reproducibility of .87 (a quasi-scale).

Parents who have extreme interest in only one area of their children's lives are considered to have less interest in them than parents who have a moderate amount of interest in many areas of their children's lives.

Obviously the two concepts are related. Parents who attempt to control most of their children's activities are interested in their behavior within those areas. However, the reverse is not necessarily true. Very permissive parents, by definition, would not exercise great control over their children's activities even though they would have a high degree of interest in them.

FINDINGS

In Tables 1 and 2 the relationship between the adolescents' perceptions of parental control and interest in the two samples are compared, controlling on sex role. As can be seen, there were statistically significant differences in the 1968 and 1976 male and female adolescents when their responses of the perceptions of the degree of interest their mothers and fathers have in them and the degree of control their mothers and fathers exercise over them are compared. Converting the scale types into arithmetic means (which some statisticians would object to because we have ordinal data), we have the following means:

	Mean Scale Type
Male adolescents - paternal control, 1968	3.01
Male adolescents - paternal control, 1976	3.22
Female adolescents - paternal control, 1968	3.07
Female adolescents - paternal control, 1976	3.44
Male adolescents - maternal control, 1968	3.14
Male adolescents - maternal control, 1976	3.40
Female adolescents - maternal control, 1968	3.15
Female adolescents - maternal control, 1976	3.56
Male adolescents - paternal interest, 1968	2.77
Male adolescents - paternal interest, 1976	3.14
Female adolescents - paternal interest, 1968	2.78
Female adolescents - paternal interest, 1976	3.09
Male adolescents - maternal interest, 1968	3.01
Male adolescents - maternal interest, 1976	3.47
Female adolescents - maternal interest, 1968	3.02
Female adolescents - maternal interest, 1976	3.67

TABLE 1

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN 1968 AND 1976 MALE AND FEMALE ADOLESCENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF PATERNAL AND MATERNAL CONTROL

	Control								
	Low						High	Total	Total
Year	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	%	N
	Male-Paternal Control[A]								
1968	5.5%	16.5%	17.3%	20.2%	18.6%	16.5%	5.4%	100.0%	3050
1976	4.8	10.2	16.4	22.4	24.3	16.5	5.6	100.2	3020
Total N	313	809	1023	1291	1302	1000	332		6070
	Female-Paternal Control[B]								
1968	4.8	16.4	16.7	19.7	19.4	17.4	5.7	100.1	3233
1976	3.0	9.3	15.6	21.1	24.2	17.2	9.5	99.9	2856
Total N	241	796	985	1242	1317	1052	456		6089
	Male-Maternal Control[C]								
1968	2.3	16.9	18.8	18.9	19.6	16.5	7.0	100.0	3206
1976	3.3	8.2	15.8	21.6	26.2	18.3	6.5	99.9	3179
Total N	181	802	1103	1292	1464	1111	432		6385
	Female-Maternal Control[D]								
1968	1.9	17.1	17.7	19.8	20.1	17.4	6.0	100.0	3388
1976	2.4	7.7	14.8	21.0	25.3	18.5	10.4	100.1	3097
Total N	137	820	1055	1321	1465	1162	525		6485

[A] $\chi^2 = 74.69$, df = 6, C = .11, P = .001
[B] $\chi^2 = 117.20$, df = 6, C = .14, P = .001
[C] $\chi^2 = 150.18$, df = 6, C = .15, P = .001
[D] $\chi^2 = 184.21$, df = 6, C = .17, P = .001

TABLE 2

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE 1968 AND 1976 MALE AND FEMALE ADOLESCENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF PATERNAL AND MATERNAL INTEREST

	Interest								
	Low						High	Total	Total
Year	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	%	N
	Male-Paternal Interest[A]								
1968	8.0%	17.8%	20.7%	18.7%	17.1%	12.8%	4.8%	99.9%	3038
1976	7.0	12.6	16.6	18.3	21.3	17.2	6.9	99.9	3018
Total N	455	921	1132	1120	1164	909	355		6056
	Female-Paternal Interest[B]								
1968	7.4	17.7	19.7	20.8	16.3	13.2	4.7	99.8	3224
1976	8.7	13.0	16.7	17.7	19.0	15.8	9.1	100.0	2858
Total N	489	944	1113	1177	1070	876	413		6082
	Male-Maternal Interest[C]								
1968	3.1	17.2	21.6	20.0	16.8	14.5	6.8	100.0	3190
1976	4.4	8.8	15.1	17.8	23.8	21.0	9.1	100.0	3176
Total N	240	826	1166	1203	1293	1131	507		6366
	Female-Maternal Interest[D]								
1968	3.4	17.0	19.6	21.8	17.0	14.2	6.9	99.9	3374
1976	4.4	8.1	13.4	15.7	22.0	21.4	45.0	100.0	3098
Total N	251	825	1077	1224	1255	1142	698		6472

$^{A}\chi^2 = 88.09$, df = 6, C = .12, P = .001
$^{B}\chi^2 = 95.66$, df = 6, C = .12, P = .001
$^{C}\chi^2 = 222.76$, df = 6, C = .18, P = .001
$^{D}\chi^2 = 341.97$, df = 6, C = .22, P = .001

Several things are rather interesting when examining the above means and the two tables. First, consistently we see an increase in interest and control when comparing the perceptions of the 1968 adolescents with those of the 1976 adolescents. In other words, assuming the validity of the scales and the accuracy of the adolescents' perceptions, we have evidence that parents have greater interest in and control over their adolescent children now than they did eight years ago.

Second, we see some interesting differences in the way in which mothers relate to their adolescents compared with fathers. Consistently the mother is viewed as displaying greater interest in and control over the adolescent, regardless of the sex role of the adolescent, than the father (Cf. Chafetz, 1974, Papanek, 1969, Droppleman and Schaefer, 1963, and Curtis, 1975). These data would not support any assumption that the family is disintegrating, if one index of disintegration is located in the kinds of parent-adolescent relationship investigated here.

The second objective of this paper is to examine the changes that have occurred in the role of the female adolescent as reflected in her perceptions of her relationship with her mother and father. We assumed that differences in male and female adolescent perceptions of paternal and maternal control and interest would be greater in 1968 than in 1976. The reverse is more nearly true. Table 3 illustrates the statistical relationships between sex role and paternal and maternal control and interest controlling on social class (McQuire, 1949).[5] (The frequency

[5]McQuire has suggested an index of class-typed value attitudes consisting of four variables: education, religious affiliation, occupation, and source of income. From this total index score it is possible to predict status level.

TABLE 3

MEASURES OF ASSOCIATION AND TESTS OF SIGNIFICANCE FOR RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN SEX ROLE AND PATERNAL AND MATERNAL CONTROL AND INTEREST ACCORDING TO SOCIAL CLASS FOR 1968 AND 1976 SAMPLES OF ADOLESCENTS

Variables	Control	Measures of Association Tau C	C	P*	N
1968 Sample					
Sex Role & Paternal Control	Upper Middle	.03	.05	.15	1396
	Lower Middle	.01	.02	.34	2103
	Lower Class	.03	.05	.10	2784
Sex Role & Maternal Control	Upper Middle	.03	.07	.19	1476
	Lower Middle	.01	.02	.28	2206
	Lower Class	.03	.01	.31	2912
Sex Role & Paternal Interest	Upper Middle	.01	.05	.37	1390
	Lower Middle	.01	.05	.34	2096
	Lower Class	.02	.04	.20	2776
Sex Role & Maternal Interest	Upper Middle	.00	.06	.50	1468
	Lower Middle	.01	.03	.38	2188
	Lower Class	.01	.07	.39	2908
1976 Sample					
Sex Role & Paternal Control	Upper Middle	.07	.10	.02	1368
	Lower Middle	.07	.10	.001	2273
	Lower Class	.08	.10	.001	2235
Sex Role & Maternal Control	Upper Middle	.03	.10	.16	1419
	Lower Middle	.08	.10	.01	2404
	Lower Class	.05	.07	.01	2453
Sex Role & Paternal Interest	Upper Middle	.00	.06	.48	1369
	Lower Middle	.02	.09	.22	2270
	Lower Class	.01	.05	.28	2237
Sex Role & Maternal Interest	Upper Middle	.10	.12	.001	1418
	Lower Middle	.07	.11	.001	2402
	Lower Class	.07	.08	.001	2454

*This is based on tau C. Chi Square tends to be larger.

distribution for the two-way analyses were not all presented because they are so extensive.) As can be seen, there were no statistically significant differences (.05 or smaller) between the responses of the male and female adolescents in 1968. In 1976, on the other hand, eight of the twelve relationships studied were statistically significant. The one major exception to this was paternal interest. We assume that fathers now relate more easily to their sons and, apparently, the sons perceive as much paternal interest in them as do the daughters. Contrary to what we assumed, it appears that parents are now rearing their daughters differently from the manner in which they rear their sons, in terms of the interest and control variables utilized in this research. Adolescent girls seem to have been reared more like boys were in 1968 than they are today.

DISCUSSION

This paper has had two major objectives. One objective was to examine the changes that have occurred in parent-adolescent relationships, in terms of parental control and interest, from 1968 to 1976. The data presented here indicate that there are changes and these changes are in the direction of greater control over and interest in adolescents now than eight years ago.

Assuming the scales utilized in this research are valid, we can only speculate as to the bases of the changes. Perhaps the angry reactions of adolescents during the violent sixties have caused parents to become more involved in the lives of their adolescent children. Possibly the drug subculture, the aftermath of an unpopular war, increasing sexual permissiveness, sanctioned abortions, pornography, and other social changes directly and indirectly related to family life have triggered the changes. Perhaps parents of adolescents in the sixties were more fearful of the reactions of their children than they are now. Perhaps with dramatic increases in the frequency of divorce, parents turn to their adolescents for emotional support. Whatever the reasons, there appears to have been changes in the parent-adolescent relationships.

Whatever the reasons for the changes, there is no support in this research for those family sociologists who see the eventual demise of the family. If the family is in a process of disintegration, it is not in the areas of parent-adolescent relationship investigated in this research.

The second objective of this paper was to examine the differences in the relationship adolescent males have established with their parents compared with adolescent females. We assumed that with the feminist movements some changes would be reflected in the relationship between adolescent females and their parents. We found that changes had taken place, but not in the direction we predicted. The relationships between male and female adolescents and their parents were more similar in 1968 than in 1976. Today there are significant differences between male and female adolescents in terms of their parental relationships with parents expressing (as perceived by their daughters) greater interest in and control over their daughters than their sons.

This is difficult to understand. Perhaps the changing sexual mores have caused parents to be more concerned about their daughters than their sons. Perhaps the feminist movements simply have had no impact on adolescent females. Another possibility should be considered. Meeker and Weitzel-O'Neill (1977) argue, after reviewing several studies concerning role differentiation in families, that contemporary American families seem to be one of the worst places to get information about sex role expectations and behavior.

REFERENCES

Bernard, Jessie
1976 "Change and Stability in Sex-Role Norms and Behavior." Journal of Social Issues 32(3):207-23.

Chafetz, Janet Saltzman
1974 Masculine/Feminine or Human? Illinois: F. E. Peacock Publishers.

Curtis, Russell L., Jr.
1975 "Adolescent Orientations Toward Parents and Peers: Variations by Sex, Age, and Socioeconomic Status." Adolescence 10(40):483-94.

Droppleman, Leo F. and Earl S. Schaefer
1963 'Boys' and Girls' Reports of Maternal and Paternal Behavior." Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology 6:648-54.

Epstein, Cynthia
1975 Reflections on the Women's Movement: An Assessment of Change. New York: Institute of Life Insurance.

Lopata, Helen Z.
1971 Occupation: Housewife. New York: Oxford University Press.

Lynn, D.
1972 "Determinants of Intellectual Growth." School Review 80: 211-60.

Meeker, B. F. and P. A. Weitzel-O'Neill
1977 "Sex Roles and Interpersonal Behavior in Task-Oriented Groups." American Sociological Review 42(1):91-105.

Melville, Keith
1977 Marriage and Family Today. New York: Random House.

Papanek, Miriam L.
1969 "Authority and Sex Roles in the Family." Journal of Marriage and the Family 31(1):88-90.

Roper, Brent S. and Emily Labeff
1977 "Sex Roles and Feminism Revisited: An Intergenerational Attitude Comparison." Journal of Marriage and the Family 39(1):113-19.